

nutrients, and Basic Oak-Hickory Forest higher up where soils are shallower and drier. Typical canopy trees are oaks, hickories, yellow poplar, ash, sweetgum, beech, and basswood. Each ravine seems to have plant species or some ecological feature that the others do not, so the overall plant diversity is high. These slopes are critical to the wetlands below in providing clean water, nutrients, and minerals.

MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION: Erosion from adjacent clearcut slopes is potentially a problem, since only a very narrow buffer has been left along creeks and streamheads. It is recommended that buffers be widened between clearcuts and streams and between clearcuts and the Marsh Ponds. Alternatively, a program of selective cutting would ensure plenty of buffer.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Piedmont/Mountain Semipermanent Impoundment, Basic Mesic Forest, Basic Oak-Hickory Forest.

RARE PLANTS: Cypress-knee sedge (*Carex decomposita*), piedmont aster (*Aster mirabilis*), Cumberland spurge (*Euphorbia mercurialina*), Huger's carrion-flower (*Smilax hugeri*) are all state listed. Water-spider orchid (*Habenaria repens*) is on the state's Watch List. A number of plants previously unknown in Richmond County occur at the site, including yellow lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium pubescens*).

RARE ANIMALS: Bald eagles have occasionally been seen foraging at this stretch of river. Two white ibis foraged in Marsh Ponds in June 2000.

REFERENCES:

- Schafale, M.P. and A.S. Weakley 1990. Classification of The Natural Communities of North Carolina. Third Approximation. NC Natural Heritage Program, Division of Parks and Recreation, Raleigh.
- Sorrie, B.A. 2000. Site Survey Report, Marsh Ponds. NC Natural Heritage Program, Division of Parks and Recreation, Raleigh.